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THE EDITORS

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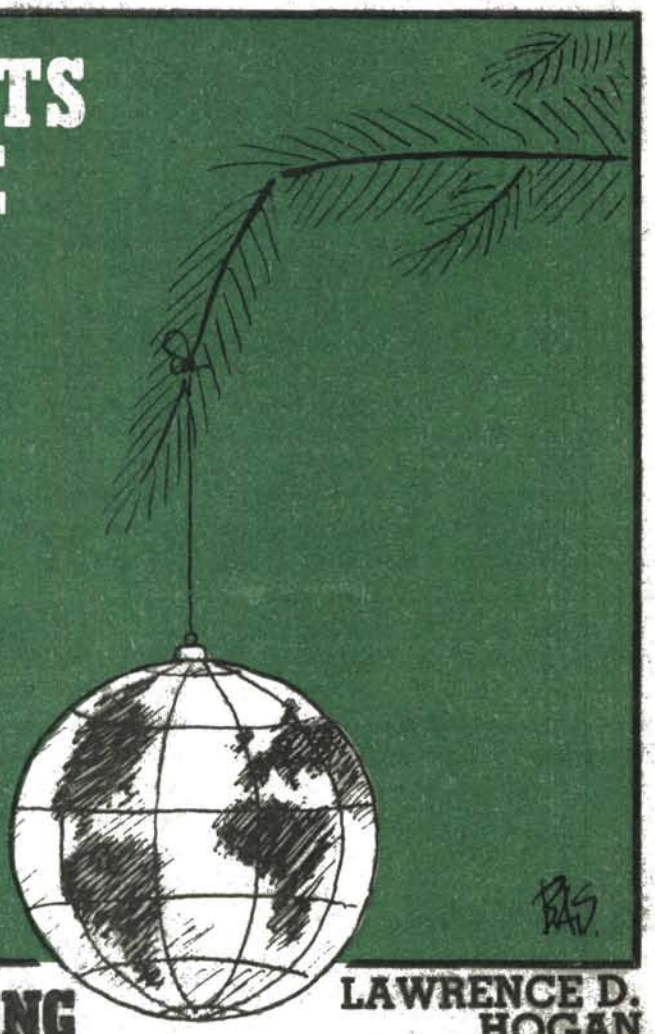

WALESA & KING: SNOOPING ON NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS
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Correspondence

Let homosexuals be?

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: In his review of the documentary film *Chicken Ranch* [Sept. 23], Dan Dickinson argues fairly and persuasively to his conclusion that prostitution is no harmless indoor sport but, as the Victorians said, "a despicable vice that exploits and dehumanizes both its practitioners and participants." Without further argument, he then draws an analogy between those who make light of whoring and those who contend not only for decriminalization of homosexual acts but for some cultural legitimation of homosexuality. "It isn't enough simply to let homosexuals be."

The culture does not simply let homosexuals be. Many employers, landlords, schools, churches, and editors still treat them as pariahs, or as figures of fun, most often without reflection on the nature of homosexuality or the consequences of homophobia. It is not enough any longer simply to brand homosexuals as decadent and evil, as Dickinson allows himself to do by inference; the case has to be argued. It is too bad that this casual reference appears in the same issue with an editorial in which, for the first time to my knowledge, *Commonweal* acknowledges that perhaps homosexual love can sometimes be a source of grace.

ROBERT G. HOYT

Church's China card

Charleston, S.C.

To the Editors: The article on religious faith and Communist China entitled, "The Catholic Church, An Eyewitness Report," by James T. Myers [Oct. 22] was very educational for the readers of your magazine. The article gives an up-to-date insight into the present situation of Christianity in the People's Republic of China.

The article highlights some of the grave hindrances to the evangelization of the Chinese people. For many years I have been interested in how Christianity can permeate the vast numbers of Chinese who are citizens of the People's Republic. There seem to be two factors that militate against evangelization. One is that the Chinese are educated to give allegiance only to those persons and institutions that are Chinese. Foreign influence is despised. Also, those who have any connection with Taiwan are not given an open hearing.

As the readers know, there is a fundamental question concerning how the Holy See can get Chinese recognition of Roman Catholic bishops and priests who are faithful to the Holy Father. At the same time, these Chinese want to be faithful to their Chinese culture. Even though the barrier may seem insurmountable, the church in its long experience has always found some type of resolution in conflicts of this kind. That is the reason for concordats. Concordats are filled with certain mutual agreements that are less than perfect.

From the articles by Mr. Myers and by James Kenneson, "The Curiosity of Christianity," it seems that those who may be desirous of bringing the Gospel to the people of China must prepare in a very careful way. The strategies must be authentic. Reason always has its way of threading through alien philosophies and theologies. History tells us that governments are usually willing to compromise with those who do not threaten the basic political system.

I commend *Commonweal* for making a major contribution to furthering the knowledge of the present religious situation in China by publishing the articles on Communist China.

(MOST REV.) ERNEST L. UNTERKOEFLER
Bishop of the Diocese
of Charleston

The Chinese puzzle

Moncks Corner, S.C.

To the Editors: Since I happen to know and admire Dr. James T. Myers and his expertise on matters Chinese, I have to be on the *qui vive* that chauvinism doesn't show through in my comments *re* his timely article on the Catholic Church in China [Oct. 7].

Special pleading aside, Jim Myers has shed some badly needed light, *via* anecdotes and close-up observation, on the darkling scene of religion in China today . . . a mixed bag, with plenty of ambiguity but with some bright spots of hope. We ingenuous occidentals can justifiably continue musing on enigmatic Cathay, a puzzle still to Marxist scientism.

Commonweal, you've done valuable service to China-watchers by running Myers's on-the-spot reporting side-by-side with James Kenneson's companion-piece — an equally incisive reflection on the stand-off between the human itch to know truth and the Communist ruse that slogans about truth will do. They don't. They won't.

Dr. Myers convincingly shows what is happening in the lives of *human beings,* in contrast to the standard Marxist ethos which is interested only in disembodied *humanity*. His experience with flesh-and-blood individuals dramatizes the implications of Kenneson's analysis of how some Chinese wrestle, in practice, with what the government tells them they should think and be, in theory.

A Catholic — any Christian — cannot but feel that surely in the Person of Christ and in his message, the twain of East and West *can* meet — if given a little space to stretch.

So far as I've seen, the U.S. press hasn't matched the sort of enlightening view that Dr. Myers provides. Kudos to you for making it available.

(ABBOT) AIDAN CARR, O.C.S.O.

Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.

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commonweal

AMERICAN BOMBERS OVER LEBANON

AT CHRISTMAS TIME this year, American bombers are over Lebanon, and the nation mourns its dead, more than two hundred and fifty Marines. What are we doing in Lebanon, people ask, and why were our troops there to serve as a target for attack? The Marines cannot come home, President Reagan originally said, "until the situation is under control." But that is not good enough; as the *New York Times* promptly pointed out, the situation in Lebanon has been beyond anyone's control for eight years. Like Mr. Nixon, Reagan is worried about national believability. Stability in Lebanon, he told the nation, "is central to our credibility on a global scale. . . . If Lebanon ends up under the tyranny of forces hostile to the West, not only will our strategic position in the Eastern Mediterranean be threatened, but also the stability of the entire Middle East, including the vast resource areas of the Arabian Peninsula." That is, we think, overstating the case by a good bit. Lebanon should be a matter of some concern to the U.S., but it is hardly one of vital strategic import. If it were, how have we survived its dismemberment since 1975 by the PLO, by Syria, by Israel, and most of all by its own feuding political and religious sects?

But the U.S. does have considerable interest in a stable Lebanon, especially as it affects the rest of the Middle East, and that interest grows the more American blood is shed there. One way or another, the Marines are there; it would not be easy just to withdraw them now. Nonetheless, they should not be allowed to remain simply as sitting ducks for every suicidal enemy who comes along. The United States went into Lebanon almost with its eyes closed. Now it is essential that Washington come up with a better grasp of just what we seek in Lebanon and just what is possible. This task is made even more necessary by our newly strengthened relationship with Israel, a relationship which will almost certainly antagonize the entire Arab world and further endanger peace in the region.

In 1958 Dwight D. Eisenhower sent not 1200 but 30,000 troops to Lebanon. Things were less fragmented then, and his intervention succeeded in calming down an already troubled religious and political situation. But 1200 Marines cannot achieve the same thing now. Indeed, it may take a miracle to bring the seventeen warring factions in Lebanon together, and that miracle cannot be stamped "Made in the U.S." Only the Lebanese themselves can achieve it, and so far there is little to indicate that the will for the effort is present.

Syria resents the terms of the American-negotiated peace agreement between Lebanon and Israel, and Israel refuses any modification in the points of that agreement. The result is an impasse. Some U.S. thinkers look at Syria, occupying more than half of Lebanon, and see the USSR; if we do not attack the Syrians ourselves, they believe we should persuade Israel to attack and knock Syria out of the game entirely. It is true that U.S. Marines went into Lebanon only as a result of Israel's ill-conceived invasion of that unhappy land. Nonetheless, it would be folly

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to ask Israel to drive the Syrians out, just as it would be sheer madness for us to enlarge the Marine force and try to do so ourselves. With seven thousand Soviet troops and advisers in Syria, it would be hard to find a surer way of igniting a large-scale Middle Eastern war and of involving the Soviets directly in it.

During his recent visit to this country, the United States urged Lebanese President Amin Gemayel to extend his army's control in the south. This is something that is far easier said then done, with an army that reflects all of that nation's tragic internal divisions. The other recommendation made to President Gemayel was that he should broaden his political base. This was good advice. Lebanon's first need is for national reconciliation — something it has so far failed to accomplish without outside prodding.

Lebanon is a confessional state, with political representation allotted according to religious strength. This system, which gave Christians a dominant position, worked for years. It was, however, based on the last census to be held, in 1932, and everyone agrees that the demographic picture has changed radically since that time. Christians like President Gemayel and his followers whom we are protecting fear for their well-being if they yield more power to their adversaries. In a country with a history like Lebanon's, such fears are not imaginary; Christians are entitled to ask for firm guarantees in any shift in power. Nonetheless, such a shift is necessary and inevitable if internal peace is ever to be restored to that war-torn nation. Christians, however, are not the only ones who should be required to give guarantees and make concessions; all the warring factions should do the same. If they will not do so, their refusal should be a clear message to U.S. policy-makers; this country must make it very plain that U.S. Marines will not be used to pull refuseniks' chestnuts out of the Middle Eastern fire.

President Reagan thinks U.S. and Israeli bombing can persuade the Syrians to withdraw their troops from Lebanon. This tactic might work, but it is a long shot, and it risks uniting the Arab world against us. Lebanon was once part of Syria; if the U.S. thinks it has a vital interest in Lebanon, why shouldn't Syria as well? Neither Syria nor Israel will readily withdraw their troops, nor will warring Lebanese leaders who last month tried to kill each other become bosom friends overnight.

In short, Lebanon is the tar-baby of the Middle East; once we have embraced it, we will find it hard to disengage. It is therefore imperative that the U.S. weigh its options carefully before going much further. With new headlines of attack and counterattack appearing almost every hour, no editorialist can easily examine such options. However, it is possible to argue for and against certain broad possibilities.

First of all, Lebanon's warring factions should be put on notice that they must make peace if the U.S. presence in their country is to continue. Second, the United States should not encourage Israel to attack Syria, nor should we expand our forces there to do that task ourselves. Third, the U.S. should consider the possibility that it made a mistake in negotiating a peace treaty between Israel and Lebanon with no input from Syria; despite Israeli objections, that treaty should be subject to reexamination. Fourth, deeply objectionable as the government of President Hafez el-Assad is, Syria's vital interest in its next-door neighbor must be recognized, and third-party efforts to bring Syria to the bargaining table should be renewed. The negotiated settlement that might result from such bargaining would not be completely satisfactory to the United States or to anyone else, but it is still likely to be far better than the present situation.

Above all, we would urge caution on Mr. Reagan. Force sometimes works, but it is always dangerous. The Middle East is in an extremely volatile condition at the moment; one misplaced American bomb could set off more of an explosion than the U.S. bargains on.

BESIDE THE MARK?

The Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church (ARCC) was formed four years ago in the wake of the Vatican's censure of Hans Küng and its investigation of Edward Schillebeeckx. Recently the group, speaking for one thousand members, issued a charter of Catholic rights *in* the church which expands the principles of collegiality and lay participation considerably beyond the current practice. Bishops have the right to teach, the charter avers, "only after wide consultation"; all Catholics, "regardless of race, age, sex, sexual orientation, state of life, or social position," have the right to receive *all* the sacraments—which means the married and women can be ordained, and divorce ought not be a bar to communion. Coming on the eve of the official instatement of the revised Code of Canon Law, which the charter claims "only partially articulates the principles which should inform a just, loving, and therefore fruitful, relationship between the magisterium and the people of God," this implicit counterstatement may raise some hackles. Its authors intend it as an "invitation to dialogue."

To readers of *Commonweal* the issues that the ARCC charter raises are hardly *terra incognita*. That's not surprising since the names listed on the organization's board of directors are names that also frequently crop up in these pages. And it is not difficult to see why a charter like this would strike many Catholics as particularly relevant at this moment. The Vatican investigation of U.S. seminaries and religious orders, acknowledged tensions between Rome and the American bishops, the recent inquiries into the stewardship of Bishops Hunthausen (of Seattle) and Sullivan (of Richmond)—all these incidents justify attention to questions of justice within the church. It is not clear yet, but the nineteenth-century battle over "Americanism" could be doing a rerun.

We are well aware of all that, and aware of the considerable common ground we share with the charter's authors; and yet we have some reservations. To begin with, a rule book propounded by defenders of ecclesiastical underdogs may be a crude instrument for settling complex, disputed questions like those of divorce and remarriage or sexual ethics. A good number of the declared "rights" are plain common sense; but

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CHRISTMAS TANKS

THE SOUND of the army tank rumbling down the street was deafening. Coming near the end of the parade, it was seen by many to be the highlight of the day. As the tank rolled along the street, the soldiers inside delighted the onlookers by swinging the tank's cannon around the tank. When the tank passed a church, the cannon aimed directly at the church. One began to wonder. A parade with Santa Claus and elves and high school marching bands and one lone army tank—it all seemed so paradoxical. Christmas and a tank? What a strange combination. Whose kingdom will rule?

At Christmas we worship the Son of God, the Prince of Peace, the King of heaven and earth. In history classes we learned of the pharoahs, Alexander the Great, Caesar, Charlemagne, the Czars, and Hitler. Kings and queens, presidents and prime ministers are only temporary fixtures in the course of events. But, for the Christian church, there is One who will rule forever. Christ the King will have command, when all the other kings and kingdoms have passed away.

While the rulers of this world find security and strength in the arms of military weapons, the King of Kings comes to us born in a stable and crowned with thorns and placed on a cross. That looked like defeat, though nothing short of the miracle of victory. The crucified Christ now rules wherever there is forgiveness. With him there is peace and wholeness, with him there is glory and authority.

We who follow Christ the King are called upon to be peacemakers. We are called upon to bear the burdens of the sorrowful and the forgotten. We are invited to be agents of healing and reconciliation between husbands and wives, between neighbors, between parents and children, and between nations.

Our Lord and King will come some day in full honor and glory. We live in the meantime, in hope and expectation. We live under His sovereign authority, catching a glimpse and participating in His Kingdom. . . "you are forgiven". . . "given and shed for the forgiveness of your sin". . . "peace be with you."

The organizer of the local parade was not moved by criticisms of the use of military power. "It's called the Holiday Parade but it's really to open up the Christmas shopping season. I'd get eighteen tanks if I could."

ROGER H. PREHN

(The Rev. Roger H. Prehn is pastor of St. Matthias Lutheran Church in Greensburg, Pennsylvania.)

many others are so general that it is hard to see exactly who is put under obligation by them or what would constitute their infringement. Others are so sweeping that, taken literally, they would mean an almost total break with traditional Catholic polity. Occasionally the asserted rights lean heavily on the pious language of the contemporary mind ("self-realization as unique human beings. . . authentic human living"); at other times, it is unclear exactly what they are aiming at: "all Catholics have the right freely to enjoy the fruits of the arts and culture."

Finally, however, it is less any specific disagreements with our friends' ecclesiastic Magna Carta that bother us than the worry that the whole exercise may fall beside the mark. The simple fact is that a challenge to the lingering authoritarianism in the church does not carry today the charge of a decade ago. We ask ourselves why.

One reason is the extended jostling of the post-conciliar period has given many Catholics a much keener sense of their own freedom to make choices. The institutional, social, and psychological pressures that can be wielded by church officials loom much less large. That does not mean there aren't many individuals, especially those directly employed by the church, who aren't subject to these pressures. But the irritation or weariness that others feel at confrontations over ecclesiastical equality and individual rights is not limited to conservative circles, and may reflect a kind of schism of sensibility, one that has to do with a difference in ranking problems, a different order of priorities. We live by stories. As Joan Didion observed at a time of personal disorientation: "I was supposed to have a script, and I had mislaid it. I was supposed to hear cues, and no longer did. I was meant to know the plot, but all I knew was what I saw: flash pictures. . . images with no 'meaning.' . . . " That, from a liberated woman, strikes us as more a comment on the culture than the individual. What it has too often been left to conservatives to articulate is a growing alarm about the thinning, the evisceration, of our individual and collective plot lines. Genuine theological conservatives—and we do not mean those for whom a false certainty or tidy chain-of-command masquerades as faith—have worried that the "decisions of conscience" which liberals rightly celebrate will, in the concrete, be informed by the slackness of soap opera, the slickness of Timese, the attention-span of the one-minute commercial. They have their eyes on a whole generation who have grown up knowing only that whirl is king.

This is an aspect of the theological agenda on which both conservatives and liberals can join; to put soul back into action; put substance, psychological complexity, and spirited virtue into our narratives of self and society. There are places in the world—behind the Iron Curtain, in South Africa and Latin America—where freedom of choice deserves priority attention, but in the America of the eighties the most pressing issue may be the shallowness or depth of that choice.

THE NON-VOTERS

Well, we can't be right all the time. In an editorial on voting in our Dec. 17, 1982 issue, we cited the successful example of other countries and urged that election day be scheduled on a Sunday in an effort to improve voter turnout. Now a poll conducted by Harvard University and ABC News to find out why people do not vote indicates that having a holiday on election day would increase voting, but that conducting the

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balloting on Sunday might actually result in lower turnouts.

Heaven knows we don't need any such decrease. Almost half of the country's eligible voters do not cast ballots. In the Carter-Reagan race in 1980, for example, only 52.4 percent of those eligible bothered to go to the polls. Subtract the number who voted for Jimmy Carter and for John Anderson from that 52.4 percent, and you can see that a small minority of Americans actually determined that Ronald Reagan should become president — a result that would have been the same, of course, if Carter or Anderson had won. Millions and millions of Americans simply do not choose to participate in the choice of those who will govern them.

Can anything be done about this situation? The Harvard-ABC poll suggested a few things would help. Easier registration would encourage 11 percent of those surveyed to vote and would help those who moved from one voting district to another. Seventy percent of those polled favored a twenty-four-hour voting period, and this would help. Half said they would be more likely to vote if they had a holiday on election day. Such procedural changes would promote somewhat greater participation. But in general the indications are that major increases will be hard to achieve. The problem with low turnout is apparently not to be found in procedure but in motivation. Particularly harmful is the widespread belief that voting makes little or no difference. Most people who vote are better educated, older, and better paid than those who do not. (A striking exception to this general rule was found in the case of the black population. Blacks are less educated and earn substantially less, but once registered they vote at nearly the same rate as whites.)

After weighing all these factors, the poll-takers came to the discouraging conclusion that "there is probably little or nothing that government, the media, or society in general can do that would dramatically increase turnout in the short run." According to the pollsters, an increased level of higher education was the long-range change that was most likely to raise the proportion of adults who vote, and that change is obviously not going to come about overnight. Lacking any contradictory findings from another poll, we are forced to reluctantly accept the conclusion that a big jump in voter turnout is unlikely in the near future. Nonetheless, we still think that some increases in the short run are worth working for. As the survey director put it, "For many citizens, not voting is as American as apple pie," and that translates into voting figures that are a national disgrace.

STAFF OPENING

Commonweal may be seeking an addition to its editorial staff sometime in early spring. The position would involve writing, editing, working with authors, and numerous routine production tasks, much of this done under pressure and in a stimulating but spartan environment. There is some flexibility in regard to the starting date.

Applicants should be Roman Catholic lay women or men with wide cultural and political interests and knowledge. A demonstrated talent for lively, incisive writing is essential; some editorial experience is preferred. Four-day work week but modest salary. Applications by mail only. Applicants should include full curriculum vitae or resumé, writing samples, and a letter describing themselves and their interest in *Commonweal*. All appplications will be considered confidential and given careful attention.

Washington report

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THE PRESIDENT STILL LEADS CONGRESS

"CATS AND DOGS may be brought up at any time," so warned the House Democratic cloakroom recording after listing the items scheduled for the session's last day, November 18. Notwithstanding those sensitive to feline and canine defamation, this wry allusion is made at every session's closing to measures of dubious merit that might slink or bark their way to the floor in the final flurry of late nights and ever-shortening attention spans.

Yet there were relatively few surprises or strange animals of any sort appearing in the last days of the first session of the ninety-eighth Congress. What was left instead was an accumulation of legislative accomplishments that had been well-modulated by the power of the presidency. "The government is a shared relationship," observed Wisconsin Democrat Rep. David Obey. "Reagan has ninety percent of the power and Tip has five percent." House Speaker Tip O'Neill himself underscored this political reality, justifying a compromise with the White House by noting that Ronald Reagan had "the bat and the ball."

Well, the third game was not so much of a rout as the first two, but after all the hits were added up, Congress's third session during the Reagan administration still ended with more of the runs going to the president. Of course, Reagan's refusal to allow any tax increase, a stance assuring the failure of the congressional attempt to reduce the $200 billion deficit, leaves increasing uncertainty as to American standing in the Western Division for the World Series.

Ronald Reagan scored exceedingly well in defense and foreign policy. Save for the production of binary munitions (nerve gas), Congress approved every new weapons system he requested. The $249.9 billion defense appropriations, cleared for the president on the session's last day, was a 4 percent increase, after inflation, over fiscal 1983. There are those who will point to Reagan's January budget request for a 10 percent "real" growth rate in defense funding and then to the June congressional budget resolution's halving of that rate to 5 percent, and thus interpret the actual 4 percent spending as a White House loss. The reduction, however, was distributed

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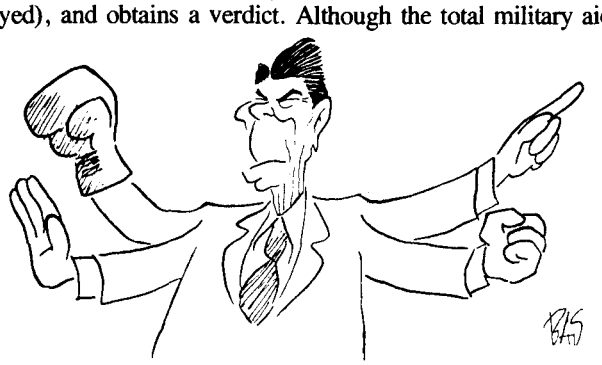
across the board with no fundamental changes in the president's defense policy. This administration has mastered the skill of asking for much more than it possibly could get in order to gain strategic victories while complaining painfully over any wrenching compromises.

The defense appropriations also contained $24 million for "covert" aid to Nicaraguan guerrillas, a compromise provision drafted November 17 by House and Senate conferees. Opponents of the aid held up as a victory the precedent set by barring the president from spending any further funds for covert aid without his going back to Congress for more monies—possibly as early as 1984. The covert operation had previously been maintained through CIA contingency funds and secret parts of defense and intelligence spending measures.

Yet the advantage seems to be with the president. Not only has he avoided a congressionally mandated date for cutting off the operation, but by mid-1984 Reagan will have provided aid to the anti-Sandinistas for more than two years with little interference from Congress. Moreover, the president scored again when a provision was dropped in the defense bill conference that would have established a procedure giving the Appropriations and Intelligence Committees veto power over any new CIA covert operations.

The president's priorities in foreign aid also fared well as Congress ducked the usually contentious direct funding bill for the second year in a row and provided for foreign aid in an omnibus continuing resolution. As compared to fiscal 1983 amounts, the bill increased military aid programs 15 percent and cut funding for economic and development aid by 5.6 percent (counting both on- and off-budget items). Maryland Republican Senator Charles "Mac" Mathias maintained that although "humanitarian development assistance" has increased by 10 percent under the Reagan administration, military aid has increased 100 percent. In addition to supporting the president's campaign for boosting arms sales, the continuing resolution scores again for executive power by not stipulating the accounts under which aid is given. This grants Reagan greater freedom than any recent president in allocating military aid among countries.

Congress withheld 30 percent of El Salvador's $64.8 million military aid until the Salvadoran government completes its investigation of the former national guardsmen accused of murdering the four American churchwomen in December 1980, brings the accused to trial (which has been repeatedly delayed), and obtains a verdict. Although the total military aid to be withheld is limited to 30 percent, another 10 percent is to be withheld until the president certifies to Congress that Salvadoran authorities have not taken any action that would "modify, alter, suspend, or terminate" the land reform program in a manner detrimental to the intended beneficiaries. (These restrictions stand despite the president's pocket veto of another measure dealing with the same matters.)



Yet while the appropriated level was cut by $21.5 million below Reagan's request, he was starting fiscal 1984 well ahead of his beginning in the previous fiscal year when Congress approved only $21.3 million. Supplementals and funds transfers eventually brought El Salvador $81.3 million in fiscal 1983 military funding. It is expected that the administration will seek additional military aid as the fiscal year progresses.

Of course, Lebanon and Grenada are the most frequently cited instances where presidential power is seen to be overshadowing Congress. Certain members take comfort in the fact that, for the first time in the ten-year history of the War Powers Act, a War Powers Resolution was formally recognized by a president, when Reagan signed into law the resolution authorizing U.S. Marines to remain in Lebanon up to eighteen months. On the other hand, in signing the measure he questioned the constitutionality of the Act and explicitly reserved his prerogatives as commander in chief of the armed forces; earlier, he had declined to report to Congress under provisions of the Act.

The president has until April 1985, well past the November elections, before he must pull the Marines out. Nearly all Senate Democrats opposed such an extension in principle as an erosion of legislative authority. But Speaker O'Neill negotiated the compromise resolution and was able to bring along about half the House Democrats with him to pass the measure. Attempts by Senate Democrats during the last weeks of the session to restrict the authority granted the president failed. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee bottled up a Democratic resolution to force a Marine withdrawal in early 1984 unless a further period was approved by Congress.

Congress was assured by White House spokesman Larry Speakes, two days before the scheduled end of the session, that the sixty-day deadline of the War Powers Act did not need to be invoked in the case of Grenada since all U.S. combat troops would leave the island by late December (non-combat troops might have to stay until early 1984). The congressional leadership has noted that the War Powers sixty-day "clock" started running on the day Grenada was invaded, October 25.

It was just the possibility of such a Christmas surprise—or some even bigger gift-wrapped marvel from the White House—that prompted the leadership to place an unusual phrase in the adjournment resolution. The clause authorizes Speaker O'Neill and Majority Leader Baker to reconvene Congress during the recess, if warranted by the "public interest." Well, the president may still have the "bat and the ball," but Congress can call for a tenth inning.

JEREMIAH BARUCH

(Jeremiah Baruch is the pseudonym of a Washington writer with a position in the government.)

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Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

PEACE & LAUGHTER

ADVENT & 'THE DAY AFTER'

TELEVISION MOGULS take little account of the liturgical seasons. Nor do we ourselves. At least, that seemed to be the message of viewing polls after *Thornbirds* was aired during Holy Week. But this time they seem to have got it right by accident. "The Day After" was given to us for our contemplation during the week between the last Sunday after Pentecost and the First Sunday of Advent—a vivid commentary on the readings in the service of the Word.

Matthew's Gospel for the last Sunday speaks of the "abomination of desolation." We are bidden to take refuge "not going down to carry away anything from the house, if they are on the housetop; not going back to pick up a cloak, if they are in the fields." "It will go hard with women who are with child, or have children at the breast, in those days"—a point made rather heavily in the film. And "there will be distress then such as has not been since the beginning of the world, and can never be again."

Then we have Advent. It is easy to forget that it is a time of preparation for the second coming as well as the first. But Luke makes that all too clear on the First Sunday. "The nations will be in distress, bewildered by the roaring of the sea and its waves; men's hearts will be dried up with fear, as they await the troubles that are overtaking the whole world; the very powers of heaven will rock."

"The Day After" wasn't very well done, but it really didn't have to be to make it very clear that at any moment now we are very close to bringing on the abomination of desolation by our own free acts. If the pollsters are right, however, the huge viewing audience of 100 million Americans were as little affected by what they saw in changing their minds or ordering their lives as they usually are by homilies on the Gospels quoted. Perhaps our hearts are really dried up by fear and all we can do is await what is to come.

They forgot, of course, to poll the children. One haunting picture of a child's reaction stays with me. He wasn't a very appealing child—a small boy with a bulging forehead and horn-rimmed glasses, almost the mirror image of his "strong defense" father whose stance, as he staunchly assured the McNeil-Lehrer show audience, was unaffected by viewing the possible horror. But the little boy's was. He hadn't realized it could be like that, he said falteringly and feeling for words—people burned to skeletons in a flash and "families lost from each other." The muddle of his impressions swinging from the scarifying nightmarish visual effects to the universal child's fear of losing his family, made him at once endearing and a spokesperson for all children.

That little boy's fear and realization was almost the same as that of the Russian children we also saw on television not so long ago. They were very serious blond children, grave and articulate. They knew that no one would survive nuclear war, they said. They were sure their country would not start one. They wanted to live in peace with all children everywhere, they said. Propaganda, that's what our American little boy's father would have said. And perhaps they were saying what they had heard and had been taught—but one thing they knew. No one would survive. They would not live to grow up.

Children do not ask too much. Yet even without the nuclear threat hanging over them we have not given them a good world to live in. That was brought home to me recently by the message of a doughty little Episcopal nun from Belfast. Sister Anna has been in this country trying to raise funds for Lagan College, a secondary school staffed by both Catholics and Protestants, where Catholic and Protestant children go happily to school together and learn not only their own tradition but enough of each other's to breed respect and understanding. Sister Anna carries with her a poem written by one of the children. Only one line of it comes to me now—and it may not be entirely right but it echoes in my mind: "this is a place of peace and laughter." "Peace and laughter" in a city of hate and terror. Peace and laughter—that is what children need to grow as they should grow. And they have so little of that in today's world. Peace and laughter and enough food.

We are so used to the pictures. Wounded children on a stretcher in Lebanon. Starving children on the edge of the Sahara. Malnourished and stunted children in the appeals for funds in magazines. We read daily about the battered children as child abuse becomes endemic in our own country., The usually dispassionate columnist David Broder was recently so upset by the hearings on hungry children and their mothers—increasing numbers suffering from anemia, underweight and underheight for their age—that he wrote bitterly, "A country that can choke down a fake nuclear war between ads for Gourmet Pop Corn and Dexatrim Appetite Control capsules cna swallow almost anything . . ." Letty Cottin Pogrebin, writer of books on children, is so disturbed by their present condition that she has written a book whose thesis is that we — or, at least, we, through our society — hate children.

The coming we most associate with Advent is the coming of the Child—of the one who said that unless we become as little children we will not enter the kingdom. He meant, we can believe, the kingdom on earth as well as that in heaven since that is what he taught us to pray. Perhaps it is time for us to follow the advice of the liturgy—to refuse to let our hearts dry up with fear—to do what we can to solve the problems of those near us, the hungry, and the poor, and to ask like children for food, for peace and laughter. Let the children tell us what is important and what to do.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

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Church/world watch

The case of Grenada

J. Bryan Hehir

OF GRENADA it may be said that the commentary may be more important than the contest. Consequences in this instance refer to the way various publics are reacting to the U.S. invasion of Grenada. The case of Grenada is being invoked to condemn or to justify much larger political realities. Irving Kristol, neoconservative analyst writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, cites Grenada as an example of how the U.S. should be expected to act, politically and morally, in defense of democratic values. Father Michael Gilgannon, an articulate and perceptive American missionary in Latin America, uses a *National Catholic Reporter* essay to identify the Grenada action as a teachable moment which should be used to help U.S. Catholics understand the interventionist history of U.S. policy. Clearly the commentators are reaching for larger stakes than deciding about Grenada. Probing the reactions to Grenada may be more important than evaluating the case.

Initial responses to the invasion were mixed but decidedly more positive than critical, both here and there. The Caribbean political leadership, from the moment of the invasion through the British Commonwealth meeting in late November, consistently expressed support for U.S. actions. The religious leadership of Grenada, including the Catholic bishop of the island, sent a telegram thanking the United States for its response. Public opinion polls taken on the island were solidly in support of the definition of the U.S. action as a rescue. All of these reactions can be skeptically examined in light of how small nations behave in the shadow of larger ones, but they cannot be lightly dismissed unless we are to conclude that the views of people in small nations do not count.

In the United States the administration won the public opinion battle decisively; whether one uses polling data, the media, or key voices in the Congress (including Representatives Barnes and Boland), no sustained dissent has been effective. Again, this can be attributed to public relations technique and the failure of nerve among key congressional leaders in the face of a popular president, but that is how presidents win public opinion contests—by depriving opponents of the initiative.

Was the victory a rout? Is there any significant dissent? There has been, and it cannot easily be ignored. In Central and Latin America voices from across the political spectrum found the invasion and its justification — saving the continent from Communism — unacceptable. From the Caribbean Council of Churches to the Organization of American States the United States faced resistance and hostility. In the U.S. debate, selected but substantial voices were raised against the long-term wisdom and short-term justification of the Grenada action. Senator Moynihan, hardly a Soviet apologist, eloquently captured the two key objections to the invasion: democracy is not spread or saved by guns, and a nation which often appeals to international law ought to have more respect for the law in its foreign policy. An intriguing editorial in the *New Republic*, in the end more favorable to the invasion than critical of it, still recognized the administration case as fragile at best and fraudulent in some key assertions.

The significance of the commentaries lies less in their substantive judgement on the past than in the way they will be invoked in the future. The *decisive* case for or against the Grenada policy may not be possible just now. But other conclusions are possible.

First, *U.S.-Soviet relations:* the president characteristically placed the U.S. action in this context, linking both his policy in Lebanon and Grenada with a common theme of resisting Soviet regional aggression. The cosmic connections here are surely vulnerable; the world is neither that simple nor that tightly integrated. There may be a case for administration policy in both Lebanon and Grenada, or more probably for one but not the other, but the identification of the two is propaganda not policy.

More serious is the tendency of commentators like Mr. Kristol and the *New Republic* to explain the Grenada action in terms of "how great powers act," i.e., by using power. Strikingly absent in this line of argument is any consideration that great powers also act by setting precedents for other powers. Mr. Reagan resists and resents the analogy of Grenada and Afghanistan, but this may not be the key case. The United States has clearly reinforced the convention that big powers are supreme in their own region — above the logic of the law. The Poles are hardly Grenadians, but the precedent for Soviet intervention in Eastern Europe — especially if invited in by key actors — has been strengthened by U.S. actions.

Second, *U.S.-Latin American relations:* if precedents are important between superpowers, memories are important among neighbors. The muted but real criticism from Latin American governments is but a symbol of how the worst aspects of U.S. history in Latin America have been reinforced in the minds of multitudes less likely to be as polite as their governments. When we count the cost of the Grenada action, this too must be weighed.

Third, *Grenada and Central America:* this is the heart of the matter. If either the public reaction to or the policy conclusions drawn from the Grenada exercise are used to move the Reagan administration even further toward direct military action against

(Continued on page 698)

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Pawtucket & its Nativity scene

DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.

ON OCTOBER 4, 1983, the United States Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case of *Donnelly v. Lynch*, the question at issue being whether the city of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, has the constitutional right to erect and maintain a crèche as part of its annual downtown Christmas display.

The suit had been filed by Daniel Donnelly and other members of the Rhode Island affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union, against Dennis Lynch, then mayor of Pawtucket. On November 10, 1981, federal court Judge Raymond Pettine ruled in favor of the ACLU, finding that the crèche violated the religious establishment clause of the first amendment. The city appealed, and on November 3, 1982, the First Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Pettine's ruling in a two-to-one decision.

From a material point of view little or nothing was altered as a result of Pettine's decision. The city sold the religious components of its display to a private group (headed by Lynch, no longer mayor, and his wife), which in turn erects the display in precisely the same spot where the city erected it, a privately owned park in the city's downtown business district.

So why bother? Why go to all the expense and trouble of taking an appeal from the District Court ruling to the Appeals Court and the ruling of the latter to the Supreme Court? What possible difference can it make to the children visiting the display who holds legal title to the figures of the baby Jesus and his friends?

"The point," says Pawtucket's current mayor, Henry Kinch, "is not how we can sneak around in the dead of the night to put up the crèche. The point is: Do we have a right to carry on fifty years of community tradition? The nativity scene is a focal point of our community."

Former mayor Lynch echoes Kinch's remarks. "Every community," he says, "has the right to continue its cultural traditions, and our community has clearly said it wants its Christmas tradition continued."

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Both Kinch and Lynch (the whole thing sounds like something out of Dr. Seuss: Kinch and Lynch versus the grinch that stole Christmas) agree that support for the city's stand is overwhelming among Pawtucket's citizens, Kinch estimating it may run as high as nine to one.

Frankly, I don't like the current display as much as the old Christmas display the city had when I was a boy growing up in Pawtucket in the forties and fifties. In those days it wasn't in its present downtown location; instead it was at Slater Park, a large municipal park at the eastern edge of the city, miles from the downtown business district. It had the same mix of sacred and secular elements it has now: Santa and his reindeer (though Rudolph hadn't yet been introduced in those far-off days); Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus; shepherds, magi, angels, and elves; a myriad of lights; and loudspeakers playing "Silent Night" and "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" (in the old days preferably sung by Bing Crosby). But somehow—largely due to its location, remote from commercial activity, remote in fact from any activity at all except for families slowly driving by and stopping to show the nativity scene to their children—the old display worked better than the new one. It created that air of sentimental solemnity which is perfect for a child's Christmas. I have no doubt it contributed both to my religious formation and to my affection for Pawtucket—an affection which abides even though I left the city a dozen years ago for the bright lights of Newport, thirty-five miles down the road.

But all that was in the good old days of the postwar era, before suburban malls and shopping centers—along with I-95 to take you to them—had devastated Pawtucket's once-flourishing business district. In those days downtown merchants didn't need the help of the baby Jesus to draw plentiful supplies of Christmas shoppers. To one who remembers Pawtucket in its heyday, the business district today feels like a ghost town. It seems harsh that constitutional scruples should deprive the few remaining downtown merchants of the little ghostly aid available to them.

Pawtucket is one of those places it's hard to love unless you were born and brought up there. If you've ever been to Manchester, New Hampshire, or to Haverhill, Lowell, Lawrence,

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or Fall River, Massachusetts, then you've seen Pawtucket. It's an old textile city—once upon a time, in the golden days of the J. & P. Coats Company ("Coats's," as everyone in Pawtucket called it), the thread-making capital of the world. Everybody my age and older remembers falling asleep on summer nights to the noise of textile machinery, a monotonous but soothing music carried through the warm and otherwise rather quiet air from round-the-clock mills. But virtually all the textile factories have long since deserted Pawtucket, and their abandoned buildings now house hundreds of small manufacturing concerns.

Pawtucket is a heavily Catholic city in a state which has a higher percentage of Catholics in its population (nearly 65 percent) than any other in the union. Among the city's Catholics, the Irish are most numerous, followed by the French-Canadians, with significant numbers of Italians, Poles, and newcomer Hispanics. English and Scottish Protestants remain a sizable though dwindling group. (Their influence on the city's distinctive cuisine however has not diminished: people from Pawtucket are still inordinately fond of pork pies and old-fashioned fish-and-chips, these latter sprinkled liberally with vinegar.) The city has small but notable Greek, Armenian, and Syrian (both Catholic and Orthodox) communities. There are few blacks, many of them Cape Verdean Catholics. The Jewish community, while not large, is a very significant presence in one corner of the city.

It is a working-class and lower-middle-class town, with the former more numerous than the latter. It's doubtful there is even a single person among the 71,000 dwelling in Pawtucket who can legitimately claim upper-class status It has its occasional millionaires, to be sure, but their lifestyle is of middle-class or even working-class inspiration: rare the subscription to the Boston Symphony, common the trip to Las Vegas. The city is utterly devoid of elite amenities but abounds in proletarian comforts—most notably, good food and drink at cheap prices at the many family restaurants, neighborhood bars, and drink-and-sandwich spots that dot the city.

Though of course I didn't realize it at the time, Pawtucket was a kind of protective ghetto when I was growing up. It kept us oblivious to the not very flattering judgments the world at large was inclined to make on people like us. In the pre-Kennedy, pre-Vatican II era, Catholics were still regarded with some suspicion and disdain by their fellow citizens. But in Pawtucket we had no sense of this, no feeling of inferiority. Being Catholic, it seemed, was the most normal thing in the world. And in the age of rapid middle-class-ification and suburbanization that followed World War II, the working class, after its brief exaltation during the New Deal era, fell into increasing disesteem, while working-class cities like Pawtucket were held by the upwardly mobile in positive contempt. But we knew little or nothing of this. The proletarian pride of the FDR years lingered in cities like this long after it had faded in the nation at large. The city of course had the disadvantages of a ghetto as well, and it inflicted no small amount of pain and frustration on young persons of cosmopolitan instincts. But while it may have narrowed our intellect, at least temporarily, it never wounded our self-respect.

Since those days Catholics have entered the mainstream of American life and don't need protective ghettos anymore. But the working class still needs shelter, needs it more than ever perhaps, in a society which in the last few decades has made it increasingly difficult, both financially and culturally, for workers and their families to be full-fledged participants in the national life. Without that shelter, alienation, resentment, and disorientation flourish. Pawtucket is still a city that does an effective job of providing that shelter.

IN HIS DISTRICT court opinion, Judge Pettine found that the Pawtucket crèche violated all three parts of the triadic test used to determine infringement of the establishment clause of the first amendment. It does not have a *secular purpose*, for the use of a "patently religious symbol raises an inference that the city approved and intended to promote the theological message that the symbol conveys." Its *primary effect* is the advancement of religion, since the crèche, by virtue of the prominent place given to it in the city's Christmas display, "confers more than a remote and incidental benefit on Christianity." And the potential for political divisiveness over this issue indicates there is unnecessary state *entanglement* with religion.

The three-member Court of Appeals upheld Pettine on a split vote. The dissenting judge, Levin Campbell, argued that since Christmas is a constitutionally permissible holiday, the symbols essentially connected with Christmas, including religious symbols, must also be permissible. The other two judges agreed with Pettine's findings on the religious purpose and effect of the crèche, but disagreed with him on the entanglement question.

In the appeal to the Supreme Court the Reagan administration sided with Pawtucket, filing a friend of the court brief that stressed the difference between unconstitutionally "promoting" religion and constitutionally "acknowledging" it. "To recognize that Christmas has something to do with the birth of Christ," said the Justice Department, "is not to 'prefer' Christianity over other religions, but simply to acknowledge its constituent meaning." Friend of the court briefs siding with the ACLU were filed by he American Jewish Committee and the National Council of Churches.

The city made a *de minimis* argument, contending that the

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nativity scene is a minute portion of the city's overall Christmas celebration, accounting for only $20 of the $4,500 cost. The ACLU responded in effect that to spend even one penny would be unconstitutional: its attorney agreed, under questioning by the Supreme Court, that the logic of his position dictated that not even a single Christian Christmas tree ornament would be permissible.

When Pawtucket's attorney defended the essentially secular nature of the city's Christmas celebration as a "folk festival," he roused the ire of some religious leaders, who considered the offending expression to contain a vast theological impropriety. With defenders like that, they felt, who needs enemies? And strictly speaking, I suppose, the expression contains an anthropological impropriety as well. Pawtucket is hardly a "folk community," a term which conjures up images of a peasant village, ancient and isolated, nestled in some Bavarian or Thuringian valley. Yet, despite the unfortunate choice of words, the city's attorney had a point.

The differentiation of sacred and secular from one another was a relatively late development in human history. Only after that differentiation had arisen could a deliberate decision be made either to link or not to link the sacred and secular; prior to that point the two realms were so inextricably mixed that they were not two at all, but one. In our part of the world this differentiation has long since been accomplished, and during the last couple of centuries the decision has been made to keep the two realms separate from one another, especially in government and business. Yet there are residues of the earlier, predifferentiated state of affairs, Christmas—the popular or "folk" Christmas, that is, not the Christmas of the churches—being the most notable of these.

The prevailing interpretation of the First Amendment's establishment clause presumes an already existing differentiation between sacred and secular, prohibiting state support for a differentiated sacred. It is less clear that it must prohibit support for a residual pre-differentiated event like Christmas. If the ancient popular Christmas had at some time spontaneously differentiated itself into two distinct festivals, one strictly sacred, the other strictly secular—a kind of winter carnival—there would be little question of the constitutional impropriety (not to mention the historical retrogression) involved in state support for the superimposition of religious elements onto the winter carnival. But this has not happened. Popular or "folk" Christmas remains what it has always been: a compound of religious, secular, even magical elements; a celebration of children, both our own children and the Christ Child who symbolizes their infinite worth; a remarkably durable and reassuring moment of primitivism in the darkest days of the year.

As I write, the Supreme Court has not yet announced its decision in *Donnelly v. Lynch*. Though I fear I'll expose myself to the charge of insensitivity to the menace of creeping sacralism in American life, let me confess: I hope Pawtucket wins this one.

APPOINTMENTS & ABILITIES

Cabinet government, competent government

KEITH BURRIS

MUSICAL CHAIRS at the White House in the cabinet and in the higher circles of statecraft, has become, in the last twenty years, almost routine. But the recent Watt-Clark escapade deserves special note as well as historical perspective.

Our system does not build in "cabinet government," nor does it constitutionally define executive branch advisory and administrative power. Moreover, the growth of the executive branch has been cancerous in almost every sense of the word. So, it is fair to say we are still in the process of assimilating the age of bureaucracy and administration. Nonetheless, as recently as Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, the federal executive branch seemed to be under control (or essentially under control) in both budgets and management.

Both bureaucratic largess and budget began to slip under Dwight Eisenhower. Though "revisionists" are now saying Ike was secretly omnicompetent, the militarization of foreign policy and the loss of executive lines of accountability began in the fifties. In that decade, the Defense Department and the military industrial complex the president later warned us about began to balloon. Under Eisenhower, the CIA and the Department of State became adventurous. Under Eisenhower, the idea of extra-constitutional, non-treaty foreign policy arrangements ("doctrines" and "resolutions") began to take hold. Under Eisenhower, the National Security Council and the White House staff became major power sources. Eisenhower may have left the country in better shape than he found it, but he helped to unleash amorphous and unchained energy in the executive branch.

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Cabinet power and responsibility were further eroded under President Kennedy. Kennedy appointed a weak Secretary of State so, he said, he might act as his own. He appointed a non-political mathematician/businessman to head the Department of Defense. He made his campaign director (and brother) not Postmaster General and head of the Democratic party, but Attorney General and chief law enforcement officer of the land—a practice followed, with disastrous effect, by Richard M.Nixon. Kennedy shifted power decisively from the cabinet and what until Eisenhower had been the orderly and accountable growth of an entire branch of administrative government, to the White House staff and his own confidential apparatus. As Eugene McCarthy wrote, JFK personalized the presidency. Before it was imperialized, the office had to be personalized.

The history of LBJ and Nixon is well known but, except for the Ford interlude which included competent appointees like Carla Hills, William Coleman, and James Schlesinger, the trend toward weak and often unqualified or interchangeable cabinet officers has continued. President Carter fired the most independent and able of his team, reportedly because of tension between them and the White House (read campaign) staff. President Reagan has been through two Secretaries of State and three N.S.C. Advisors. Both presidents have gone the external special-government route: Carter continued the Nixon practice of appointing "tsars" or ministers of special and vague portfolio; Reagan likes commissioners and special emissaries. In foreign policy for the last seven years, we've had not only the State and Security Council changes, but four Middle East Envoys, one Central American "Envoy for Peace," the Kissinger panel, numerous advisory tours by Vice Presidents Mondale and Bush, Ambassador Kirkpatrick and company at the United Nations threatening withdrawal, preceded by Donald McHenry and Andrew Young.

Mr. Clark's jobs at State, N.S.C., and now Interior, illustrate merely the extremity of a clumsy notion of government we have gradually come to accept; any man the president wants for any job is pretty much acceptable unless he is a bigot or a crook. Experience, knowledge, and commitment to a given issue, program, or field are not taken seriously as qualifications for the top management positions in the government. One may argue that career or super-bureaucrats lend stability to the continually changing executive departments, but policy and direction are generated from above not below, and the point of keeping cabinet officers political is that in a democracy, bureaucratic power is to be held responsible.

MR. REAGAN deserves special blame for cronyism in appointments, rivaling only Warren G. Harding. And the man who ran on a platform of containing government ought to be abashed for his fox-guarding-the-henhouse mode of regulation; you do not limit government by discrediting it. But President Reagan shares the common presidential preference for weak and politically dependent men heading the departments and sycophants at The White Palace. Great presidents (Lincoln, F.D.R.) appoint strong persons as cabinet members, sometimes even political enemies. Able presidents allow cabinet officers a degree of authority and autonomy, and grant them tenure enough to learn their jobs and accomplish something.

I do not know if Mr. George Bush is an able man or not; I *do* know he is experienced. He has been a congressman, Ambassador to the UN and to China, head of the Republican Party and the CIA—but none for more than two years. I would prefer that he had been in one job for ten years instead of five for two; we might then have a record to assess. Mr. Reagan's best appointment was of William Ruckelshaus to head the Environmental Protection Agency. Ruckelshaus knows the job because he held it previously, his record is good and he is a man of independent reputation.

The president's worst appointment: William Casey, *his* campaign chairman, as director of the Central Intelligence Agency. The Senate, following the precedent of their rejection of Theodore Sorenson to head the C.I.A. under President Carter, should have sent Mr. Casey's name back on the grounds that the nomination was inappropriate. Mr.Casey would have made a fine Secretary of Commerce; he is not qualified for the C.I.A. post. Similarly, I am of the opinion that Andrew Young would have made a credible Secretary of H.U.D. or Health and Human Services, but I do not think he was qualified to head our delegation to the UN. I think Mr. John Connally was an able White House advisor for President Nixon, but he was not a very good Secretary of the Treasury. And so forth. . .

We need not amend the Constitution to allow for cabinet government. Nor ought we to tinker with the separation of powers by gutting presidential appointment power or overpoliticizing the appointment process. (We may have set some bounds here in the era of Andy Jackson.). But confirmation should be a process, and a process grounded in probity, not congressional good fellowship, partisan ardor, or the love of hot television light. The Senate may be the ultimate culprit. The Senate should assume less responsibility for the generation of legislation (much of it superfluous or poorly written), and more for the quality and qualifications of the cabinet.

In a presidential election year, the media should press prospective candidates for information on their possible cabinets. We are no longer talking about the president's five pals gathered around a kitchen table, but about selection of management for a vast labyrinth of procedures, funds, regulations, and guarantees—that Leviathan we know as modern government. We may allow ourselves to be "unrealistic" about the expansive quality of democratic administration, but we cannot afford to be careless about its tendency to be arrogant and unaccountable.

In keeping with its usual holiday practice, *Commonweal* will not publish an issue during the Christmas-New Year's season. The next issue will be dated January 13, 1984.

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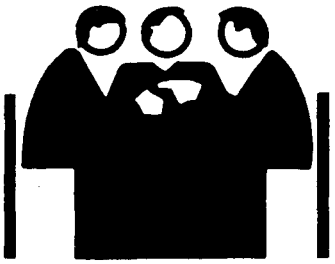

Making amateur government work

J. JACKSON WALTER

ALONE AMONG the industrialized democracies, the United States is governed by amateurs. For over two hundred years it has been the American Way to transform haberdashers, generals, farmers, and actors into presidents, then expect them to entice successful men and women from private life to Washington to fill positions of vast responsibility for modest pay, long hours, harsh public scrutiny and nonexistent job security.

Predictably, the results have been less than ideal. As a nation we fail to attract our most capable citizens to the top jobs in government.

By contrast, nations with parliamentary traditions possess the advantage of shadow governments—a complete set of able ministers-in-waiting, ready to step into cabinet posts when their party next gains a majority. They typically serve in Parliament and are prepared to enter high administrative office by both knowledge and experience.

In the United States, however, our presidential winner starts from scratch, waiting until he has won to choose the three thousand top men and women in his government. This protracted exercise is completed only after he has been in the White House for months. Once installed, the new team players at the top, though typically successful in private life, too often prove to be innocents in the ways of Washington. Moreover, they are largely strangers to each other and even to the president. Typically, once they have gained some experience, the outgoing president returns with his entire cabinet to their various, unrelated private lives.

Without changing the way we govern ourselves, there is a better way to ensure professionalism at the top in Washington. At the urging of the Business Roundtable, the National Academy of Public Administration over the past two years talked with dozens of presidential aides and appointees from the Truman to the Reagan administration to learn from their experience.

They confirm that for want of a better system our top appointees are now chosen by BOGSAT (a Bunch of Guys Sitting Around a Table). The term was coined by Dan Fenn, upon surveying the methods being used when he was personnel assistant to John F. Kennedy. Times haven't changed much from JFK's BOGSAT to President Reagan's "kitchen cabinet." The results produce much the same, narrow field of old boy choices for the three thousand policy positions that affect all our lives.

A certain degree of BOGSAT is inevitable; that's how politics has always operated and, to an extent, informal caucusing is the life's breath of our political system. A president should surround himself with compatible aides, including those with distinguished service in previous administrations. But the stakes have become far too high to rely solely upon camaraderie and party ties.

All too frequently a political party uses every resource available to put its candidate into the oval office but subsequently fails to provide the winner with a list of the best possible administrators from its own ranks *and* the private sector. Even before the IOUs, favors, and rewards have been satisfied, the political parties should provide their nominees with an up-to-date data bank filled with the names of other capable, experienced citizens.

In addition, there's much work to be done to improve the climate of presidential recruitment, starting with the elimination of obvious obstacles to prospective appointees.

The mere idea of facing a legislative "firing squad" in confirmation hearings has turned many a talented private citizen away from even considering a position in government. No one suggests eliminating relevant inquiry; it's the obtuse and superfluous probing into private lives that turns off even the most bone-clean candidates. In the same area, have Americans really become so suspicious of one another that three separate investigations (by the FBI, the White House, and Senate Committee) are necessary before a nominee can be declared honest? From a cost factor alone, these multiple investigations have gotten out of hand. The triple intrusion upon a candidate's friends, relatives, and employers is, at best, discouraging.

Once nominees agree to brave the confirmation process, White House practice until now has been to leave them adrift to navigate the system; not a very comforting thought, even to a seasoned bureaucrat. A helping hand should be offered. The government should also pay moving expenses. At present, if a

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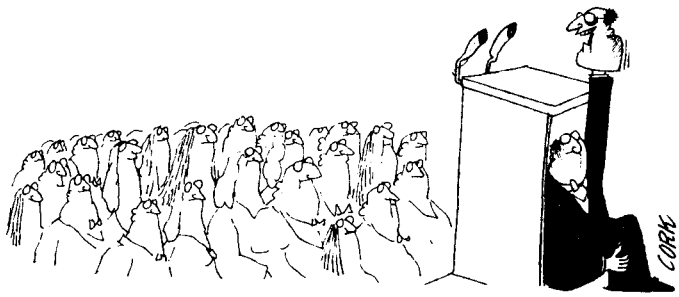
nominee must relocate to Washington, he or she must pay for the move, usually after accepting a substantial pay-cut from their private sector job and discovering the high cost of a home in the nation's Capital. No blue chip company would consider treating top talent with such indifference.

Moreover, appointees who have stock portfolios and related financial holdings find conflict-of-interest requirements confusing. Experience has proven that investments and life savings do not have to be jeopardized by public service. Here again, accurate information and good counsel from the White House will cure the problem.

There are psychic rewards to serving the American public, and certainly working for the president of the United States is an honor and a privilege worth the sacrifice of some time and income. However, if we are to strengthen and improve the



effectiveness of the oval office, we must accept that current methods used to select the president's team are far from perfect—but correctable. The president's job is already tough enough. Let's give him the best possible aides to accomplish that job.

WALESA & KING & THE POLITICS OF SLURS

Is there a Nobel Prize for peephole journalism?

LAWRENCE D. HOGAN

THIS MONTH Lech Walesa will receive the Nobel Prize for Peace in absentia, fearful that a personal acceptance would lead to his exile from his native land. In announcing the award to the Polish labor leader, Egil Aarvik, chairman of the Peace Prize Committee, compared Walesa's receiving the Nobel to that of a previous laureate, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Each man, Aarvik noted, "furthered the cause of peace through his work in favor of human rights."

The same news accounts that reported the Nobel decision took note of a concerted government campaign, part of an ongoing effort by Polish authorities, to discredit the Solidarity leader among his own people. As part of this campaign, Polish national television recently broadcast a program titled *Money* that purported to present a conversation between Walesa and his brother during the former's eleven-month "internment" at an isolated hunting lodge near the Soviet border. The tape recording has the labor leader talking about a million dollars he has sent abroad, with the help of Vatican officials, for his own personal use; complaining that the same Vatican, through the Holy Father, ruined his chances for last year's Nobel; and using language clearly unbecoming a man who always has visible on his person the Badge of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, one of Poland's most revered religious symbols. Reports last year noted a similar government effort focusing on charges of "sexual escapades," with the evidence again coming from surreptitious recording of private conversations. News stories reaching the West in the wake of the Nobel award reported that Polish authorities had attempted to circulate versions of the most recent tape in the past.

Mr. Aarvik might well have noted that the comparison between the Polish labor leader and the American civil rights leader goes beyond the unquestioned fact that both men deserve to be honored as fighters for human rights and peace. For just as Lech Walesa has incurred the enmity of those in his government who claim to be the true voice of the Polish people speaking in defense of the best ideals of the nation, so too did Martin Luther King face the hounding of government character assassins who claimed for themselves the righteous mantle of defenders of all that is best in the American national character. Even while King was delivering his eloquent speech in Stockholm accepting the Nobel that he, like Walesa, richly earned, the hounds of J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, under the guise of protecting national security, were sneakily collecting on tape, through a concerted bugging effort, evidence of "indiscretions" and "sexual escapades" that were to be used to discredit the civil rights leader and his movement in the eyes and hearts of the American people.

Stephen Oates, King's most recent biographer, writing with access to FBI records, tells us that Hoover became so exercized over King's Nobel award that the long standing FBI surveillance dating back well before the awarding of the prize

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was turned into "an intense crusade to depose and denigrate King under the excuse of protecting national security." Oates notes the status of that crusade one year after the world community, through the Nobel, honored the Atlanta minister for his singular work.

> In addition to using vast electronic and counterespionage activities, which treated King as though he were a Russian agent, Hoover and his men expanded their scurrilous monograph on King compiled the year before. The revised edition not only belabored the old Communist charge, but accused King of directing SCLC funds into private bank accounts in Switzerland. Worse, it contained lurid information culled from the bugs FBI agents had planted in King's hotel rooms that year. The bureau's ever-widening electronic dragnet had snared King in some compromising situations.

History repeats itself. Circumstances may change, but in our modern technologically proficient world the techniques of character assassination remain the same. The ingredients are easy to identify—surreptitious taping by authorities; charges of secreting public funds abroad in foreign bank accounts and of conspiring with enemies of the nation; accusations of sexual escapades; and catching your government's enemies in compromising situations.

THE POLISH authorities have it easier than their American counterparts when it comes to disseminating the ingredients of character assassination. To spread his lies all that Jerzy Urban, the official spokesman for his government, has to do is to request time on television and in the press. After all, he owns them. Official gossips haven't got it so easy in this country. When the FBI offered its King dossier to Eugene Patterson of the *Atlanta Constitution*, he rejected it, contending that his was no "peephole journalism." A similar reaction came from several southern segregationist editors approached by the FBI. "Hell," one of them told Patterson, "I wouldn't print that stuff. That's beyond the pale." And when reports about the King investigation were picked up and run by American journalists like Jack Anderson, the commentary and interpretation would often as not be a critique of Hoover and his methods rather than a discrediting of King. "Indeed, from the quantity and detail of information," Anderson wrote, "we expect there was as much voyeurism as sleuthing involved in the investigations."

It is unlikely that the Polish media will make similar judgments about the unholy hounding of Walesa. Its silence about the true nature of its government's activities is simply an expected product of the system it serves. What was striking about the aftermath of the announcement of Walesa's Nobel award was the silence of Urban, the government's normally acerbic spokesman, who was reported as unavailable for comment despite repeated phone calls to his office throughout the day. He was apparently taken aback by the honor conferred on a man he recently dismissed as "not a political problem, a person who has rather less followers than he used to." One can't help but think about a similar sentiment expressed in another context by one of Urban's heroes. "How many divisions does the pope have?" Joseph Stalin is reported to have scornfuly commented when warned about the depth of religious feeling among the peoples he was forcing into his empire.

Eugene Patterson and the southern segregationist editor had it right. Polish authorities have institutionalized peephole journalism, and routinely try to peddle stuff that is beyond the pale. Perhaps the best commentry on the sort of activity that is an accepted part of the Polish government's modus operandi comes from a person better known for his story-telling skills than for his critiques of gossips, snoops, and character assassins. Robert Louis Stevenson, he of *Treasure Island* fame, found himself mightily offended on a February night in 1890 after reading an open letter to the press written by the Rev. Dr. C.M. Hyde, a Protestant divine serving in the Hawaiian Islands. Hyde had helped halt a plan to erect a tablet in honor of Father Damien, the famous leper priest of Molokai.

Hyde's letter characterized the saintly Damien as "coarse, dirty, headstrong, bigoted, disobedient, and not a man pure in his relations with women," charging that "the leprosy of which he died should be attributed to his vices and carelessness." If Hyde had known Hoover or Urban he might have charged Damien with a Vatican-Switzerland financial connection as well.

Inflamed with righteous anger, Stevenson, who had recently visited Molokai and had come to know Damien in all that priest's defects and strengths, and to prize, in spite of all its shortcomings, Damien's courageous and effective work with the shunned lepers, took pen in hand to answer the good reverend. The letter, privately printed in Sydney, Australia on February 25, 1890, and then distributed throughout the world, ended with the following charge to the Rev. Dr. Hyde. "But I fear," Stevenson wrote,

> you scarce appreciate how you appear to your fellow men; and to bring it home to you, I will suppose your story [about Damien's "sexual escapades"] to be true. I will suppose that Damien [read King, or Walesa] faltered and stumbled in his narrow path of duty. I will suppose that, in the horror of his isolation, perhaps in the fever of incipient disease, he who was doing so much

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more than he had sworn, failed in the letter of his priestly oath—he who was so much a better man than either you or me, who did what we have never dreamed of—he too tasted of our common frailty. 'O Iago, the pity of it.' The least tender should be moved to tears; the most incredulous to prayer.

"Is it growing at all clear to you," Stevenson concluded: "what a picture you have drawn of your own heart? I will try once again to make it clearer. You had a father; suppose this tale were about him, and some informant brought it to you proof in hand. I am not making too high an estimate of your emotional nature when I suppose you would regret the circumstance? that you would feel the tale of frailty the more keenly since it shamed the author of your days? and that the last thing you would do would be to publish it in the religious press? Well the man who tried to do what Danien did, is my father, and the father of all who love goodness; and he was your father too, if God had given you the grace to see it.

Of course, the likes of J. Edgar Hoover and Jerzy Urban long ago turned a deaf ear to that kind of talk—and turned on to "peephole journalism" and to "the stuff that's beyond the pale."

Media

ADS & ADDICTIONS

BOOZE ON THE TUBE

"DON'T TAKE the car, you'll kill yourself!" Who hasn't seen that commercial by the National Council on Alcoholism—the drunk husband lurching toward his car and the panicked wife shouting from the porch? And who does not know that it has become virtually a standard punch-line for every standup comic on the circuit? When in trouble, play with that line, and the audience roars (one reason, of course, being that probably half of them are snockered, so the joke becomes self-defense: that poor boob, thank God we're not like *him,* we can handle the stuff, can't we?)

But: "If you've got the time, we've got the beer." A group of healthy, shiny-faced American males go out for a day's Marlin fishing (Hemingway sport), or mountain climbing, or hang-glider flying, just all buddies together and having a *heck* of a good, invigorating time. And, inevitably, what do you do at the end of a great day like that? Why, you gather at your favorite bar, and you start calling for the beer, probably with that most *macho* of American phrases, "Run a tab, Rosie."

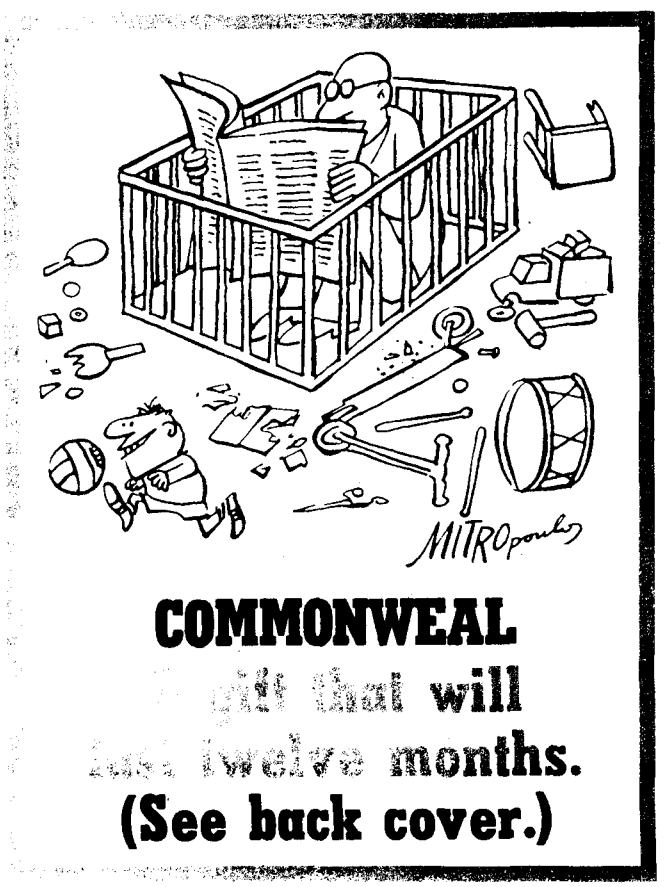
As a slogan, it's about as broad and silly as "Don't take the car, etc." So why isn't anybody laughing?

Any recovering alcoholic (and yes, I'm a member of the club) can tell you. It's because the use—and abuse—of alcohol is so deeply ingrained in, and sanctioned by, our culture that *not* drinking is perceived as the abnormal, and of course only the abnormal, the outsider, can be the clown or the fool and get a laugh.

Now this is a media column, and I am concerned with the ways media reflect both the national self-image and the national self-delusions: I am not, fear not, about to preach you a sermon on the evil of demon rum. But this time around, my subject is liquor and anti-liquor advertising in America, which is to say the ways we try to come to terms with (or don't try to come to terms with) a disease which is among the major causes of death in this country. If statistics mean anything, three out of ten of you reading this piece will contract or have contracted the sickness. In fact, given the demographics of *Commonweal*'s readership—heavily Irish and German—it is probably more like four or five in ten, since the evidence is that a predisposition, at least, to the sickness is genetically transmitted, sorry. And ten out of every ten will find themselves, their lives, their loves, affected and probably affected severely, by someone who *has* the sickness. Now *that's* what I call a disease.

It is a curious disease, moreover. Like tooth decay and hypertension, it is a disease of civilization; only when men have become civilized enough to ferment grain, precipitate sugar from cane, or evolve the profession of insurance salesmen do these ailments become possible.

It is also a disease one of whose prime constituents is secrecy. *No* drinker wants to admit that he (or she) drinks too much, so the heavy drinker goes to elaborate, and sometimes rather brilliant, lengths to invent proofs that he (or she) doesn't



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drink too much. I have sometimes thought, indeed, that as much intellectual energy has been expended by drinkers demonstrating that they don't drink as was expended by Scholastic theologians demonstrating the existence of God.

Not that everyone is fooled, of course. In adultery, runs the cliché, the wife (or husband) is always the last one to know. But alcoholism is a disease, not a sin, and in that condition it is the victim who is always the last to know—if, that is, he is lucky enough to find out.

Do you know a beer commercial that *doesn't* include a group? Do you know a brandy or bourbon ad that shows one person alone drinking? I'll answer for you: you don't, and the reason you don't is that the people who sell us our booze are smart enough to realize that it is a private addiction sanctioned by public, social acceptability. Imagine the commercials if heroin (an equivalently dangerous drug) were legal: four old pals, sitting around the apartment, setting up their gimmicks, spoon, match, hypodermic: "This skin-pop's for you."

Not that the people who run the distilleries or write the liquor ads are vampires sucking self-respect and productivity out of the soul of the Republic. They are, like the rest of us, poor souls struggling between heaven and earth and trying to make a buck on route. But the way they write the ads reflects a great deal about the way we think about alcohol abuse, and the ways we invent to convince ourselves—actually, to con ourselves—to believe there really is no such thing.

Think about booze as a metaphor for social and sexual roles. In a very serious way, we use liquor not only as social lubricant ("Ice is nice, but liquor is quicker"—Ogden Nash), but as a way of *validating* ourselves socially. James Bond—the last public school gentleman or the first punk rocker—can consume infinite vodka martinis per diem and still be razor-sharp when he confronts the vile machinations of SPECTRE. "I'll drink till I drop down, with one eye on my clothes," sings Roger Daltrey in the Who's brilliant punk-opera, *Quadrophenia*. And no American private eye would be worth his salt (and his lime and tequila?) if he did not keep a bottle of something in his lower desk drawer.

We are always in control: that is the message of the fictions of alcohol, and of the advertisements for alcohol. It is, I am convinced, the real root of the disease—the desire for total control of the environment, and the denial that there are things that can happen to us over which we have *no* control. "You have the *right* to feel rotten," said my alcohol counselor, and it was an insight and a revelation of some cultural as well as personal import. Because the liberal myth of American society is precisely that you *needn't* feel rotten: and if you do, if you happen to be black in a white world or female in a male world or chemically addicted in a "normal" world, then there must be something wrong with you. How to fix it? Well you know, you can always have a drink.

Booze—since it tried so hard to kill me, I enjoy calling it by its vulgarest name—is a kind of inverted sacrament. It is a chemically-authenticated denial of the Fall (after the third beer, do you feel that anything is *wrong* with you?) and it is marketed as such. Lately I understand why bread and wine are the materials of the Eucharist—as opposed, say, to water and roast beef; because bread and wine *are* products of civilization, unimaginable to pre-Neolithic, which is to say, pre-urban man, and the Eucharist is a blessing, a *baruch*, on the chances for urban man to exchange his urbanity for something like transcendance. But Eucharist is not euphoria, and what liquor advertising in America sells is euphoria: the camaraderie of ex-football players downing lite beer after lite beer, the romanticism of a man in a tuxedo and a woman in an evening dress sharing a sniffer of brandy, or the pure success-myth of a wealthy entertainer and businesswoman extolling the virtues of her favorite brand of vodka. The point of this sacrament is not that it conduces toward transcendence, but precisely that it reintroduces us into the secular city where, already, we felt so

Thomas Ramey Watson

On Botticelli's "Madonna of the Magnificat"

From her fine-boned face with slightly-parted lips,
her heavy-lidded eyes look down to pen her song
of the right hand and humble heart,
helped by the Christ child on her lap, who
with his right hand guides the Virgin in words of praise.

The left hand of Mary rests upon the left hand of Christ,
which holds a partly-opened pomegranate,
blessed fruit God ordained to be the frieze
on sapient Solomon's temple: its seeds, like
God's blessings and Abraham's fruit, are manifold.

Five angels, like open wounds exude sweet nectar,
their eyes on Mary, on Christ below, and above:
two angels, with left hand and right, on either side,
crown the circlets of Mary's veiled and golden hair
with a twelve-pointed corona of Florentine gold filigree

and stars numerous as pomegranate and Abraham's seed.
Madonna's breath utters praises
constant as the sun which shines down from above
and crowns all with the Spirit's gold.
Bordering the tondo, the purple-hued rainbow

of the Father's eternal fiat,
the immanence and mercy of the Son, circles
in shades that betoken his royal birth, and death.
Beginnings touch their ends; deaths,
their births, as Mary touches Eve, and Christ, Adam.

Human and angelic hands combine with God
to hold the pomegranate of his ancient pledge.
Over the apple of the earth
and under providential skies, all is gold,
and breathes his orient praise.

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Zona Teti

Christmas Poem of the Lukan Mary

If I had been born in the desert among ideals,
my life would have failed me, my shoulders unknown to
the hug
of friends, my voice song-heavy and mute,
my self eternal like a still life of spilled-out fruit.

Better the way of the Magdalene, what she became
in the bright world of medieval scripts,
the Botticellian goddess of detachment and long limbs,
swaying with faint opulence of a double chin,
polished as porcelain, with arms shining bare
from the ascetic shirt of her down-flowing hair.
Even the angels that flew to attendance
streamed back in the supple haze of pagan winds,
their silks fading into light held softly in the distance.

But never could I have been one to float to shore,
slender-stemmed as a flower, upborne
on a shell rimmed with gold, my atmosphere green and mist.

Too much of the earth for abstraction yet lovely as wind,
I would soar like a prayer that asks for nothing,
only perhaps for the privilege of conversation.
There is nothing more to me than this.
But sweet as incense I rise up to you
with words of love it is my delight to breathe,
what words will become the song of our son,
caressing your heart,your will, your need.

Zona Teti

Florentine Painters After Giotto

(for Ruby Zagoren)

At daybreak on mountains in cloisters the good life began.
The gold leaf lit up the word of God,
The vast colours shone on the vellum like jewels.
Letters curled into vines, and each majuscule
became a world shimmering with distance, visionary,
under the pens of monks steeped in eternity,
with a window to the north light and their brows shining,
with walls sheer as mountains and as calm.
Sorrows shot up like arrows but fell short
of the glory: austere, sublime, one more level up.

Below, the angels and demons hovered in the grim air,
coiled ready for souls newly sprung
from plague-dark bodies, the souls ascending
in the form of babies. In cases of doubt,
an angel took the arm, a devil the leg,
swaying him in the air like a garland for their dance.
One that my heart cries for, a man with eyes
closed in the act of death, his soul as a baby
not yet out of his mouth, and already a devil
has snatched it. The baby is bewildered.
The man's eyes are slits in the moment.
I cry for you in your bewilderment.

She will not cry, the rosed lady sleek
in velvet glowing like the nap on a fruit,
her horse sad with his mane long rippling
in the curls of a fairy prince. She pinches her nose
upon meeting three dead, the souls of their death
she will not let breathe on her face; she believes in escape.

Jesus already has left
the womanly embrace of the Mother, has left
the developing hints of breasts and knees beneath the cloth,
gone to rule in a heaven of gold from Byzantium,
blank, otherworldly, stern in judgment,
waiting for the vision of hulking Masaccio, and a return
to humanity.

hopeless and alone. The real horror of alcoholism, said Malcolm Lowry, a great novelist (*Under the Volcano*) and a drunk of Olympic-class proportions, is the terrible sterility of existence as *sold* to you.

And sold to whom? we might ask. Very few liquor ads involve women alone (except for sherry, which, as we all know, is "downright upright," right?). But the percentage of female alcoholism is—again, if statistics mean anything—rather rapidly approaching fifty percent of the total addicted population. Why the reticence, then? Just because, I think, we find the image of a woman drunk still more offensive than the image of a man drunk: sexist perhaps, but also an index of the degree to which we remain faintly embarrassed about using our drug of choice. And it is also significant, surely, that the most powerful of anti-alcohol ads on television are those which show us the suburban housewife asleep at noon on the sofa, with an empty bottle overturned at her feet and a cigarette smoldering in the ashtray. It is melodramatic stuff, to be sure; a second-rate Dickens couldn't have done worse. But it is also supremely intelligent, since, for a number of people, this is really what the specious glamor of the liquor ads comes down to.

Mack Sennett, the master of silent slapstick comedy, said that he always wanted to make a film where the Keystone Kops would, predictably, drive their car into a ditch, and then leave the camera rolling, so that the audience could—*would have to*—watch the cops crawl, bloody and broken, out of that terrible accident. They never let him do it. I, for one, would

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like to see one of those brandy or sherry commercials where the elegant man and woman congregate over their bottle and glasses, with a slow dissolve to the next morning: sprawled on the bed, hair dishevelled and sweaty, dry mouth, and unable to get up before noon.

I try not to be a moralist in these columns and I am not—repeat *not*—advocating a new prohibition or a ban on liquor advertising. But I am saying that a great deal of national distress is attributable to the way in which we market and mythicize this *very* dangerous substance. I am also, I suppose, suggesting that a large part of our natural and national growing-up process might be to realize that we *are* an addicted society, and that at least the first step toward a greater sanity might be facing up to that addiction. At the very least, we ought to be able to train ourselves to laugh as hard at "If you've got the time, we've got the beer" as we do at "Don't take the car, you'll kill yourself." The first one, after all, *is* the sillier line.

FRANK McCONNELL

(Frank McConnell is a member of the English Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara.)

Screen

THE RIGHT SUBJECT

JET JOCKEYS, SPACE ACES

IN THE BRITISH film *Breaking the Sound Barrier*, made in the 50's, the big revelation comes when somebody gets the idea that as you approach the barrier, the plane's controls are reversed. You have to shove the stick forward, instead of back, to hold her steady. This is a lot of hogwash, as Chuck Yeager, the American pilot who really did break the barrier, was quick to point out. Any peckerwood who pushed the stick forward at Mach 1 would augur in for sure. Still, it worked for Tom Wolfe. For years he had been a style in search of an adequate subject, one his writing couldn't overwhelm. The more hip, with-it and *au courant* the topics he chose—Haight-Asbury, the "radical chic" of Leonard Bernstein, whatever—the nearer to burn-out his prose seemed to come. He just couldn't seem to find a way to get over the top, to make the literary break-through that his revved-up, rocket-fueled style seemed to promise.

Then he decided to do a book about a subject that was not fashionable at all. In fact, it was twenty years out of date, and the people involved were mostly yokels, yahoos and straight-arrows of the kind Wolfe could have eaten for breakfast. But that was it. That was what he'd been looking for. In spite of himself, he couldn't help admiring these jet jockies and space aces. They turned out to be a topic with some unexpected resistance in it, just enough to give his prose the lift it had always needed to really get it airborne. This time, suddenly, his talent took off. He was "booming and zooming" as never before. He should have called his book *The Right Subject*.

As writer-director Philip Kaufman seems to have realized, the only way to adapt a book as strong and self-possessed as Wolfe's is to appropriate it. You can't match its achievement by being sycophantic, trying to exploit its success with your deference. You have to follow its lead, but also go off on your own somehow. You have to find a way to re-invent the story on your own terms. Kaufman has done this by daring to use a kind of movie rhetoric that is sometimes as overwritten as Wolfe's prose. He has had the insight to recognize that here is a story that can stand up to movie-epic treatment, to being writ LARGE, as almost no other material could today.

One of the places where the film departs from the book is by cross-cutting, as if they were simultaneous, the arrival of the astronauts in Houston and the only flight of Chuck Yeager (Sam Shepard) in the X-15. Put against each other like this, the vulgarity of the one event and the heroism of the other—Yeager crashed, nearly killing himself—become a kind of critical mass. Wolfe's material becomes fissionable; a tremendous new energy is released from it. I haven't seen cross-cutting as blatant as this (not any that worked, anyhow) since D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*. The first and last space shot by John Glenn is given similarly risky treatment when Kaufman invents a tribe of aborigines to sit outside the tracking station in Australia. They keep their own sky watch, and sparks from their fire swirl up to mingle with a field of glowing particles Glenn encounters, inexplicably, in space. This is a use of montage as crude and bold as Eisenstein's in *Battleship Potemkin*, or as Kubrick's cut in *2001* from a bone hurled by an ape to a space station orbiting the earth.

The point of Kaufman's aborigines is much the same as of Kubrick's ape. A theme of past and future also runs through *The Right Stuff*. Nor is this the only echo of the one film in the other. Avant-garde filmmaker Jordan Belson, who provided inspiration for Kubrick's time-warp sequence, gets the credit for special effects on Kaufman's film. And there is in both films something magical and original about the closeness of the time depicted. Kaufman's film gives to the near past the allurement, the mythical perspective, that Kubrick's gave the near future. *The Right Stuff* makes us realize that we have now crossed a boundary which *2001* first brought into sight. Kubrick showed us space travel as a future we could almost touch, Kaufman shows it to us as history that is already nearly out of reach.

If Wolfe could have given his work a different title, so might Kaufman. *Looking Backward from the Film 2001* it might be called. Some viewers may feel that his film is derivative of Kubrick's. But I don't; or even if it is in some ways, it doesn't matter. It's still wonderful. What Kaufman and I share is an absolute awe of these astronaut-pilots, and unabashed enthusiasm for the technology of rockets and space travel. I of course recognize that this all becomes the *wrong* stuff when it is (in my favorite sixties expression) "co-opted" by the military. Reagan just got preliminary Congressional approval for his anti-satellite missile program. Hell, Chuck Yeager went on to fly over twenty combat missions in Vietnam. But I can't bring myself to hold Yeager personally responsible—or Alan

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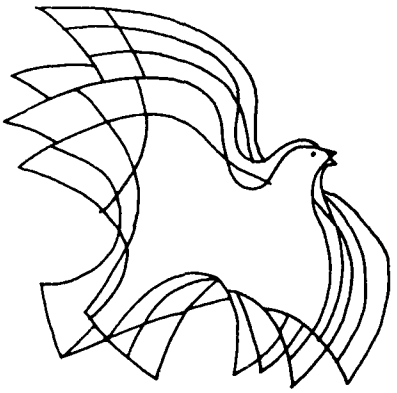

CROSS CURRENTS

— A QUARTERLY REVIEW —

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Shepard, or even someone like John Glenn. I can't see the technology as inherently evil, either. Every time the space shuttle goes up, I watch it on TV. To see that enormous rocket lift off the pad, carrying an entire airplane piggy-back, is just thrilling. That's all there is to it.

In *The Right Stuff,* there's a scene where Yeager rides out on the desert at Edwards Air Force Base and gets his first look at the X-1, the plane in which he is to break the sound barrier. Again, the scene is invention on Kaufman's part, a departure from the book, and a heavily romantic vignette with Yeager on horseback in the midst of this primeval landscape. But Kaufman has realized that the excesses of the way he has conceived the scene are almost necessary to balance the sheer presence that the plane itself has, just sitting there. Our eyes, like Yeager's, go directly to it. It would steal the scene if Yeager didn't have a kind of Conradian melodrama about him to match it.

Wolfe's account of the plane offers a better review of the scene than I can write. The plane has a peculiarly foreshortened shape compared to later jet aircraft. The reason is that the designers had given it the shape of the one "object that was known to go supersonic smoothly": the 50-caliber bullet. The plane hardly seems a plane at all. It is an orange dart with two vestigial wings, more like fins really, and "Bell Aircraft" painted on the side in script. The lettering is an inappropriately flowery, refined touch, for this is an unmistakably rough, thunderous, dangerous machine. It is, as Wolfe so simply and perfectly puts it, "just a length of pipe with four rocket chambers in it."

It is being fueled off on a corner of the base somewhere, seemingly unattended, because the alcohol and liquid oxygen being pumped into it presumably makes it too dangerous to hangar with other aircraft. It looks like a prehistoric bird, a last survivor of some gliding species half bird, half reptile, that has haplessly drifted down from the distant mountains to the desert floor, from which it is now incapable of launching itself again. This is in fact so. Like Wolfe's prose and Kaufman's movie, the X-1 had to be carried aloft to get air-borne. A B-29 carried the X-1 on its underside, from which the tiny jet was launched like a bomb. Just to look at the plane with its fuel line attached like a tether, its rockets sputtering shrilly in place as they burn off excess fuel, is to understand what the Right Stuff is. Just to see the plane itself in this early scene is to know that you're in for quite a ride in this movie. COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

Books: PAST AS MIRROR TO PRESENT

ON ENTERING the twentieth century, the Roman Catholic bishops of England issued an extraordinarily solemn Joint Pastoral Letter, "The Church and Liberal Catholicism." Following close on the heels of Pope Leo XIII's condemnation of "Americanism," which it quoted, it read any hankering for an accommodation to "the national atmosphere of free thought and public criticism" right out of the church.

One "liberal Catholic" most affected by this and subsequent declarations of church authorities was George Tyrrell, convert, Jesuit, and gifted writer of the period, to whose reflections on Catholicism the three books under review are dedicated. Each of the three rises above the level normally expected of such scholarly publications in terms of interest, readability, and significance. Ellen Leonard's is the most comprehensive and accessible; it displays a fine touch for ordering Tyrrell's concerns around his central theme, the genius of Catholicism as reinterpreted for a modern sensibility. Mary Jo Weaver presents Tyrrell's half of his correspondence with Wilfrid Ward

GEORGE TYRRELL
IN SEARCH OF CATHOLICISM
David G. Schultenover, S.J.
Patmos Press, $32.50, 504 pp.

LETTERS FROM A "MODERNIST"
THE LETTERS OF GEORGE TYRRELL TO WILFRID WARD 1893-1908
Edited by Mary Jo Weaver
Patmos Press, $35, 192 pp.

GEORGE TYRRELL AND THE CATHOLIC TRADITION
Ellen Leonard, C.S.J.
Paulist, $8.95, 197 pp.

Paul Misner

(the biographer of Newman and the father of Maisie Ward) in such a way as to afford the reader immediate contact with an intriguing case study: at issue was the Newmanian intellectual heritage which the bishops evidently held to be of no consequence. Ward took an increasingly conservative, Tyrrell an increasingly liberal view of Newman's contributions. David Schultenover's book is to have a sequel; judging by this first volume, the work will constitute the definitive record of the life and thought of George Tyrrell for a long time to come, based as it is on careful archival research. Schultenover has constructed a monument to his fellow Jesuit, as if in reparation for the hurts of the tension-ridden relationship between Tyrrell and the Society, which only ended on his expulsion or release in 1906.

Tyrrell was a Dubliner by birth who converted to Catholicism and joined the Jesuits when he was not yet quite twenty years old (1880). Later on he wrote for the Jesuit publication, *The Month*. Still later he became the leading spokesman in England for the theological views characterized as "modernist." In 1907 he was excommunicated by virtue of his defiance of Pius X's condemnations; two years later he died of Bright's disease, leaving behind the manuscript for a book that is still gripping to read, *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*.

The wave of Tyrrell and other Modernist studies, which we are now witnessing, would of course be unthinkable without the resurgence in the Catholic

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> *The opposition between old and new is more precise and acute in the Roman Church than in any other. There the question is put more clearly and exactly than elsewhere. But the answer must interest, and eventually decide, the fate of every other Church that shares any measure of the same dogmatic system and rests on the same ultimate presuppositions. If Rome dies, other churches may order their coffins.*
>
> —George Tyrrell
> *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*

world of many of the causes for which Tyrrell fought (and against which the Joint Pastoral of 1900 was directed): freedom of critical scholarship, openness to lay initiatives, and dialogue with non-Catholic thinkers, for example. Such studies, when as well done as the present ones, should meet with great interest even outside specialist circles. This past is past — and yet so characteristic of Catholicism's recent development as to hold a revealing mirror up to the present.

Tyrrell is a particularly apt figure for reflection inasmuch as he recapitulated in advance two or three phases that were to play themselves out in Catholic thought at large over the three quarters of a century since he died. He commenced and aborted his brief teaching career in a Jesuit scholasticate teaching Thomistic philosophy, which was just then being revived as the Catholic answer to the ills of modern thought. This revival turned out, in fact, to be the unlikely path by which Catholic theology transcended its past in a way perhaps worthy of Aquinas himself. But Tyrrell was to take no further part in the neo-scholastic movement: that would be the work of his contemporary Joseph Mercier and his school at Louvain and elsewhere.

Tyrrell then turned to non-scholastic thinkers, particularly to Newman as undergirded and updated by Blondel. This "mediating liberalism" filled a period of roughly the last five years of the nineteenth century: The rude shock of the Joint Pastoral made the enterprise look unlikely to succeed, on the one hand, while on the other hand a growing acquaintance with biblical criticism was persuading Tyrrell that Newman and Blondel themselves had not faced the most pressing problems arising out of historical criticism for traditional doctrine. In this he was quite right, but he did not have the training or temperament to deal very coolly with this disturbing insight. As he pressed forward, reinterpreting Catholic Christianity in the light of the early Christian expectation of the Kingdom of God, he was entering territory which theologians have only begun to explore with any consistency since the Second Vatican Council. In a way, then, his mediating period anticipated the phase of Catholic theology that culminated in the sixties; and his modernist period, summed up in *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, foreshadowed the post-conciliar developments in ecclesiology and Christology (as witness the well-known works of Küng and Schillebeeckx).

The catalyst for Tyrell was his reading of works in biblical studies thrust upon him by his eager guide, Baron von

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Hugel. He consumed the works of the French Catholic modernist scholar, Alfred Loisy, as they appeared. By 1902 he was reading German Protestant works, with that of Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, making the deepest impression. What riveted Tyrrell and did violence to his "mediating liberal" stance of previous years was the rediscovery of a historically plausible Jesus, whose message fed into a historically plausible, apocalyptically oriented early Christianity. This Jesus did not so much accommodate his heavenly teaching to the capacity of those he was addressing as struggle to express the new reality he was prophetically experiencing in the only ways available to him, those of his own setting and culture. He did not just invent metaphors for an interior Rule of God, but he expected this Rule to come "in power" in the foreseeable future. Tyrrell's own struggle with this perspective, which he quaintly but not invalidly referred to as "the assured results of criticism," is what lent serious significance to his last writings. It also made him the weathervane of storms to come in the Catholic church, of which we have not seen the last. A direct path into some key tensions of modern Catholic theology awaits those who look into these investigations.

The latest in genes

MAN-MADE LIFE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND COMMERCE OF GENETIC ENGINEERING

Jeremy Cherfas

Pantheon, $15.95, 270 pp.

ALGENY

Jeremy Rifkin

Viking, $14.95, 298 pp.

Alexander Morgan Capron

THE ABILITY of scientists to transform genes — a feat that has been repeatedly heralded to the public over the past decade through the front page coverage of each new application — is, if anything, overshadowed by the transformation in understanding about the processes of life, down to the molecular level, that has occurred in the field of genetics. Nearly a century passed between Mendel's discoveries in 1865 about the basic rules of inheritance and Crick and Watson's 1953 announcement of the double helix of DNA, the master molecule of life. In the subsequent thirty years, the growth in knowledge has been practically logarithmic — altering the ways scientists view many biological phenomena, from relationships among species to the processes by which cells multiply, divide, differentiate, and produce proteins, from the causes of many diseases (especially the cancers) to new approaches to cure them.

Both this growth in knowledge, which seems the most awesome aspect of the field so far, and the potential applications of that knowledge, specifically the ability to bring about designed changes in the gene functioning, are addressed in recent books by two authors named Jeremy, although only one book would properly be labeled a Jeremiad (Rifkin's). Both authors predict that this field has a potential for changing our world that is unequaled by any other branch of science, but Cherfas is more careful in describing the likely scientific developments and more aware of the difficulties that stand in the way of achieving that potential, particularly in complex organisms. Hence, he is much less prone to proclaim that wholesale genetic engineering of human beings will "soon" be upon us or to ignore distinctions between altering conditions caused by an error in a single, known nucleotide (such as in sickle cell anemia) and those that rest on a complex and still obscure interaction of the environment and many genes (such as intelligence and behavior).

Cherfas's book provides an excellent account of the field. It is scientifically accurate but accessible to a lay person who wants to understand what all the excitement is about. Indeed, one of the strengths of *Man-Made Life* is that it

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Published by the G.K. Chesterton Society of Canada to stimulate interest in G.K. C.'s writings. Recent special issues on Eric Gill and Christopher Dawson. Subscription $12 a year. The Chesterton Review, 1437 College Dr., Saskatoon, Canada S7N OW6.

Biblical Institute

19th Biblical Institute, Trinity College, Burlington, VT 05401, June 17-22. Faculty: Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, Paul Achtemeier, Philip J. King, Elizabeth Achtemeier. Write: Sr. Miriam Ward.

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brings the scientists (as well as the science) to life. Given the present high level of activity in molecular genetics, it is remarkable how in the early seventies the field seemed to its leaders to have plateaued — a feeling that was dramatically reversed when Herbert Boyer and Stanley Cohen found that substances called restriction enzymes could be used to splice foreign genetic material into bacteria — where the new material could be duplicated billions of times.

Though Cherfas explores the social and ethical issues presented by such developments, he sees them as inherent in the new knowledge, not as a manifestation of the wickedness of man or corporations. Rifkin, by comparison, is quick to question people's motives, and his predictions emphasize the evil consequences that might flow from this field of endeavor.

Before one gets to Rifkin's prediction that the genetic engineers are laying the groundwork for the Apocalypse, the reader has to wade through a lot of watered-down philosophy of science. Indeed, Rifkin has really written two books. In the first he attempts to show that scientific ideas have dangerous effects when they become social paradigms and vice versa. Specifically, he argues that Darwinism (which he views as nothing more than its creator's attempt to explain nature consistent with nineteenth century industrialism) is now washed up as a theory. In its place, the genetic engineers are supplying us with a new cosmology, which they believe to be an accurate description of nature but which Rifkin sees as "self-deception," merely the confusion of nature with a computer.

Regrettably, what is interesting in Rifkin's book is not new, and what is new is not interesting. Rather, in Rifkin's hands, these epistemological insights — which have been recognized at least since the Greeks and subjected to much recent analysis — are difficult to take seriously, since they are presented in exaggerated rhetoric and linked with problematic assertions, such as a suggested man/nature dualism that is reminiscent of a simplified mind/body dualism. Readers with religious backgrounds will be disappointed to find Rifkin not only equating what is (i.e., "nature") with what ought to be but also resting the "ought" on a vaguely divine basis. Seemingly unaware that in the Judeo-Christian tradition nature is God's creation, rather than being God itself as the pagans believed, Rifkin mistakes sermons for arguments.

> *The question, then, is whether or not humanity should "begin" the process of engineering future generations of human beings by technological design in the laboratory. What is the price we pay for embarking on a course whose final goal is the "perfection" of the human species?*
>
> —Jeremy Rifkin
> *Algeny*

Indeed, *Algeny* is a striking example of the technique that philosopher Carl Cohen has termed "heavy question argument." A rhetorician like Rifkin can suggest things without ever actually saying them, because a question by definition asks rather than asserts. Furthermore, his argumentation is inconsistent — he relies on authors or schools of thought to demolish an opponent (like poor old Charles Darwin), and then later ridicules the same authors or schools, without acknowledging the inconsistency.

Cherfas and Rifkin both make clear that we face many choices about the uses of gene splicing. Cherfas suggests it is possible that our governmental, cultural, and religious institutions will prove themselves equal to the tasks before them; Rifkin fears that a horrible outcome is foreordained unless we now say "no" to this whole field of science and technology.

REVIEWERS

ALEXANDER MORGAN CAPRON *is professor of law, ethics, and public policy at Georgetown University. He served as the executive director of the President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research from December 1979 to March 1983.*

PAUL MISNER *is an associate professor of theology at Marquette University.*

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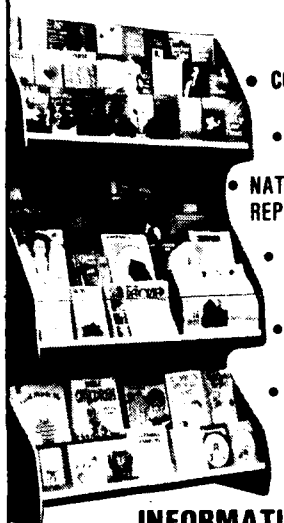

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In brief

THE HOSPICE ALTERNATIVE: A NEW CONTEXT FOR DEATH AND DYING, *by Anne Munley. Basic Books, $17.50, 349 pp.*

If you or someone you love in the United States might be struck with a terminal disease in the next twenty years, this book deserves your attention.

Written by Sister Anne Munley, a trained sociologist gifted with range, common sense, and compassion, it studies the remarkable rise of the hospice movement in a medically hostile environment. (A dying patient nails down the problem: "Hospice cares for the patient for the patient's good. The hospital cares for the patient for the hospital's good.")

Hospice is an umbrella term for those groups and institutions offering service and support to the dying and their families. The goal is "to provide symptom control through appropriate palliative therapies," as well as to promote the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual welfare of patients and their families. Services are provided by medically supervised interdisciplinary teams of professionals and volunteers. According to the National Hospice Organization, in 1982 there were over eight hundred hospice programs in the United States.

Through a series of moving interviews with patients, families, and care-givers, Sister Munley conveys the essence and tenor of hospice care. She handles all important issues with dexterity: the problem of the spiritual dimension in care for the dying, the contrast of hospice to hospital, the resistance of the health-care system to the hospice concept, and the economic precariousness of the hospice movement. On the latter, she notes the promising beachhead established by recent congressional legislation to initiate some funding of hospice care. Private insurance groups, reluctant to include hospice services in their present coverage, are watching to see the economic benefits of the government experiment.

Sister Munley concludes that "the hospice must become an institutional component of the national health-care system." She depicts the hospice movement as an active reform-agent in the American medical system, but warns of the bureaucratic dangers the movement will face if integrated into the matrix system.

The book includes several helpful appendices (one on how to find hospice care) and a rich bibliography on all aspects of death and dying. A generous offering.

PATRICK JORDAN

Church/world watch

(Continued from page 681)

Nicaragua or in El Salvador, then Grenada will have long-term significance. Those of us with doubts about or decisive opposition to the Grenada action should understand where the focus of attention should be: establishing a barrier against future interventions, not winning the debate about the last one.

J. BRYAN HEHIR

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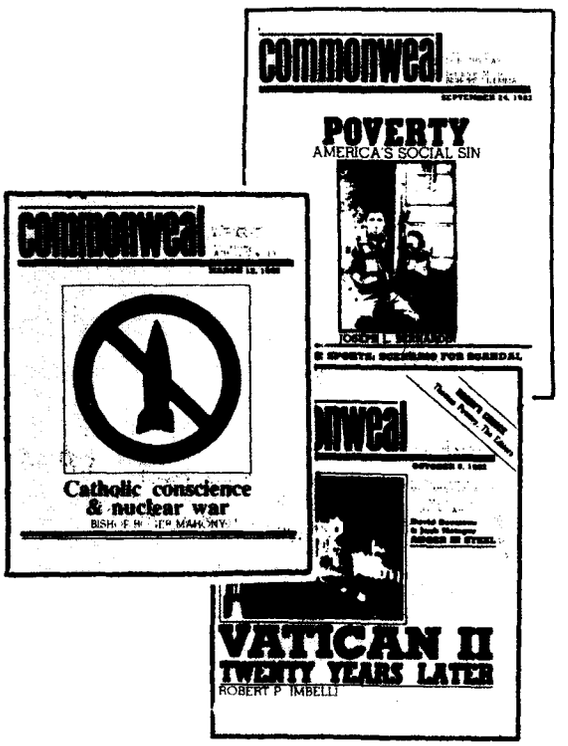

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